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Two Questions about Interpretive Effects

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1. Introduction

Our discussion of *Imagination and Convention* by Ernie Lepore and Matthew Stone (2015) will center around two questions that all semanticists and pragmaticians seemingly face:

Qe: What interpretive effects can linguistic utterances have?

Qc: What causes give rise to interpretive effects?

The first question pertains to *what gets done content-wise* when we speak: for example, we draw attention to objects, ask questions, tell jokes, and encourage reflection. The second pertains to *how all of this gets done*: for example, phonology, lexical semantics and syntax all play a role in fixing in-context content; so, frequently, do the attitudes/intentions of interlocutors. There are two facets to each question. There's the general question of what overarching kinds of effects and causes there are, that is, what taxonomic *categories* of meaning-involving effects and causes are appropriate. Then there is the specific question of which particular linguistic phenomena fall where, given such a taxonomy.

We need to stress that taking Qe and Qc as the expository core is not something Lepore and Stone do. Indeed, so phrased, these questions don't appear anywhere in their book. But we think this restructuring affords an illuminating take on *Imagination and Convention*, and on Lepore and Stone's stances therein. The essay will proceed as follows. We will spend significant time explaining our twin questions, and what we reconstruct as Lepore and Stone's views on them. We dedicate so much space to exposition because theirs is a complex and philosophically deep work: despite their claim that "there is no hiding our agenda in this book" (p. v), and despite the helpful summaries and "look-aheads" included throughout, we repeatedly found ourselves lost on our initial readings. In particular, the work's innovative use of terminology (especially what they mean by 'contribution', 'convention', 'disambiguation', 'imagination',

‘interpretive effect’, ‘pragmatics’, and ‘semantics’) can cause confusion. The section’s length notwithstanding, we necessarily abstract away from many subtle and ingenious details.

After the expository discussion, we evaluate what we take to be the book’s answers to Qe and Qc, mostly focusing (as is usual in philosophical reviews) on points of disagreement. We argue that, even taking onboard their taxonomic categories, they are mistaken about where certain specific linguistic phenomena fit. More importantly, we go on to take issue with the overarching kinds of interpretive effects, and causes of them, which they posit. We end by recalling another long-standing take on the semantics–pragmatics boundary, namely Relevance Theory’s—suggesting that one can accommodate many of the important empirical insights of *Imagination and Convention* while resisting its very radical theoretical outlook.

Part One: Explaining Lepore and Stone’s View

2. Four Key Notions from David Lewis and Donald Davidson

To explain Qe and Qc, and what we reconstruct as Lepore and Stone’s answers to them, we need some key notions, which they adapt from David Lewis and Donald Davidson, specifically ‘contribution’, ‘convention’, and ‘imagination’. We’ll provide a brief sketch here, fleshing out details as our essay progresses.

Contributions are changes to the “conversational scoreboard”, a notion Lewis (1979) introduced, and which can be thought of as the total “state of play” of a conversation. Lepore and Stone think of such changes as involving inquiry-type meaning—content pertaining to public coordination on a precise answer. As a conversation progresses, the objective state of play changes, and the scoreboard is updated to reflect these new contributions.¹ Sub-varieties of contributions include: the truth-conditions of assertions, as in all standard accounts of semantics; other informational updates to the common ground, for example, via the accommodation of presuppositions, conventional implicatures or indirect speech acts; the speech act kind to which the utterance belongs (e.g., whether a request, question, command, or statement); and information structure.

Non-contributions (our term, not theirs) are interpretive effects of other sorts: we characterize them negatively as those interpretive effects that are not contributions. Lepore and Stone hold that this class is far from empty, because the interpretive effect of an utterance need not always be a public contribution. To characterize the notion positively, consider a very familiar example: metaphor. Drawing on Davidson’s (1978) account, Lepore and Stone urge that a metaphor does not contribute a non-literal

¹ To clarify a point that can easily be missed, and can lead to confusion when reading their text: As we understand it, Lepore and Stone take the “scoreboard”/“conversational record” to be a state of the world. It is not a representation thereof—whether by the conversational participants or by some imagined third party. That is, unlike a baseball scoreboard, the conversational record does not attempt to *display* the score; it *is* the score. Thus our phrase ‘state of play’ may capture the idea better than Lewis’ own terminology does.

meaning, in the sense of a potential answer to a question. Sentences used metaphorically merely express their literal meaning—though they have the additional effect of nudging the hearer (in a direction influenced by the utterance, though not determined by it). Crucially, Lepore and Stone generalize Davidson's account, arguing that it is not just metaphors that have this kind of invitation-to-explore interpretive effect. Other sub-varieties of non-contributions, according to them, include hints and non-serious speech (such as humor, irony, and sarcasm). Very controversially, Lepore and Stone deny that any of the above involve an indirect propositional meaning of the sort associated with Gricean conversational implicatures (197).

Following Lewis (1969), Lepore and Stone construe a *convention* as a regularity that a population adopts as a solution to a coordination problem, such that a genuine alternative regularity exists. For example, we can drive on the left side of the road or the right. It does not matter which, as long as (nearly) everyone does the same thing. To overcome familiar empirical objections to Lewis (1969) from generative grammarians, Lepore and Stone extend his notion to include innate universals (where there likely isn't a nomologically possible alternative), and to allow for unconscious linguistic conventions.

Finally, *imagination* encompasses a set of open-ended cognitive processes with no determinate target. While these may incline the hearer to organize her thinking in a particular way, the point of imagination-oriented utterances is only to set the hearer on that path, with no specific destination intended.

We find chess-playing to be a helpful analogy for explicating these four key notions. Linguistic contributions are analogous to moves in a chess game properly so-called, such as taking the opponent's queen or moving a pawn forward one space. By contrast, linguistic non-contributions are analogous to gamesmanship-type non-moves, such as a player intentionally letting time run off her own clock to create a tense atmosphere, which might force an opponent into an error. Linguistic conventions are analogous to the official rules for playing chess, as codified by FIDE (i.e., la Fédération Internationale des Echecs); imagination is analogous to psychological processes in an opponent that a chess player might encourage.²

3. Lepore and Stone's Answers to Qe and Qc

With these ideas in place, we can now present the taxonomic categories of meaning-involving effects and causes with which Lepore and Stone answer our twin questions. There are two overarching kinds of interpretive effects of a linguistic utterance: those that impact upon the contributions to the conversational scoreboard (e.g., an ordinary assertion of a proposition) and those which do not (e.g., a metaphor). As for kinds of

² An important point about nomenclature which will prove essential in section 6(A) below: Lepore and Stone equate convention with *grammar*, and imagination with *inference*. Hence their subtitle *Distinguishing Grammar and Inference in Language*.

causes, there are linguistic conventions on the one hand and imagination on the other. To summarize things in terms of a chart of our own devising:

<i>INTERPRETIVE EFFECTS</i>	Caused by Convention	Caused by Imagination
Contributions (Impact the Scoreboard)		
Non-Contributions (Don't Impact the Scoreboard)		

Chart 1.1

As Chart 1.1 makes clear, four options arise from possible pairings of the two effects with each of the two causes: it is logically possible to have some contributions that are caused by convention while others could be caused by imagination, and similarly for non-contributions. Lepore and Stone do not think that all of these possibilities obtain, however. They hold that contributions are caused (almost) entirely by convention (top left quadrant of Chart 1.1), while non-contributions are caused by imagination (bottom right):

The interpretive effects of utterances arise through the contributions speakers signal with utterances – through convention – and through the further explorations speakers invite – through imagination. (193)

It's important to stress that we read this most fundamental of their claims—we'll call it their 'bold conjecture'—as an empirical hypothesis. We understand them to be saying: as a matter of fact, the intensionally distinct notions of 'due to convention' and 'contribution' turn out to (pretty much) share the same extension; as do the intensionally distinct notions of 'due to imagination' and 'non-contribution'. For reasons that will emerge below, we do not read the above as an implicit definition of '(non-)contribution' in terms of 'imagination'/'convention'.

To flesh out this bold conjecture regarding Q_e and Q_c , we need to say more about contributions, conventions, and imagination. Beginning with the first, an essential background idea is the Lewisian one that the aim of conversation is to coordinate on beliefs and actions; and that moves relevant to doing so become part of the score. Numerous elements of Lewis' scoreboard will be very familiar: the salient domain of discourse, what is mutually believed, what question is being addressed, etc. What requires more comment is an important addition that Lepore and Stone make to that familiar list, namely, information structure.

Broadly speaking, information structure pertains to how the contributions connect, and is roughly what is encoded in English by intonation. More specifically, "The grammar of information structure foregrounds what's important about each new utterance, contrasts it with other relevant possibilities, and marks its place in the dynamics of the interaction" (128). Information structure has several dimensions. One dimension is

the contrastive one, which differentiates an utterance from its possible alternatives—in English, by placing prosodic accents for emphasis (132). Information structure also has a relational dimension: linking some parts of an utterance to what has gone before, and marking other parts as moving the conversation forward. Specifically, what Lepore and Stone have in mind here is the difference between the theme of an utterance (roughly, which question the utterance is addressing) and the rheme (roughly, which answer is being given). The final dimension of information structure is interaction: whose turn it is to speak, whether the speaker needs acknowledgment before continuing, whether the contribution is complete, etc.

Turning to conventions and imagination, as Lepore and Stone repeatedly stress, there exist quite diverse sub-varieties of each. Neither is monolithic: “The rules of language are much more diverse than has been generally acknowledged, but the mechanisms through which we engage with utterance interpretation are also more varied than is often supposed” (197). Within the kind “linguistic convention”, for instance, there are those that apply at the sentence level, but there are also discourse-level conventions such as those mentioned immediately above. As one might say, traditional syntactic trees and compositional semantic rules do not exhaust linguistic conventions. Regarding sub-varieties of imagination, according to Lepore and Stone interpreting metaphor, non-serious speech and hints all require different cognitive mechanisms within the overarching kind “imagination”, which lead to distinctive creative interpretive engagement. *Very* briefly, metaphor is a kind of perspective taking that attunes us to certain distinctions in the world (170–1); sarcasm is an invitation to explore the contrast between the apparent contributions of an utterance and how things actually are; irony invites engagement with an imagined speaker; humor invites a hearer to imagine surprising and contrasting perspectives (173); and finally, hinting shifts the initiative of a conversation, leaving it to the audience to carry on in a particular direction (189).

The foregoing reconstruction of Lepore and Stone’s answers to Qe and Qc needs to be tweaked, because our strict dichotomy between convention and imagination is actually an idealization. Lepore and Stone allow the two to work in conjunction. In particular, ambiguities are often resolved by convention plus a soupçon of imagination. We call this “third kind of cause”, which straddles our top quadrants, ‘convention⁺’. Utterances can be ambiguous, in Lepore and Stone’s sense, in at least two ways: “about what form a speaker has used and what she has in mind” (131). More specifically, sources of ambiguity include how phrases combine, the co-indexing of bound variables, reference for context-sensitive terms, and linking of words to a sense with an appropriate extension (216). Crucially, convention⁺ does not “propose” any new content for the scoreboard, that is, it does not introduce new meanings. It is a much thinner category than traditionally imagined: “... understanding involves choosing the reading that makes the most sense from the candidates delivered by the grammar. Understanding does not involve enriching those readings to transform them from ones that do not make sense to ones that do” (119).

With this threefold contrast in hand, we can more accurately summarize their bold conjecture about which causes give rise to which interpretive effects:

Linguistic Conventions: Provide potential contributions;

Imagination: Provides non-contributions;

Convention⁺, convention with a soupçon of imagination: Disambiguates, selecting among the potential contributions.

And, recalling the specific question of which particular linguistic phenomena fall where in the taxonomy, their answer is captured by a filled-in version of our chart:

<i>INTERPRETIVE EFFECTS</i>	Caused by Convention	Caused by Imagination
Contributions	<p><i>Truth-Conditional Contributions</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - truth conditions of assertions - other informational updates to the common ground (i.e., public coordination on answers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presupposition - conventional implicatures - indirect speech acts <p><i>Non-TC Contributions</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - other ways of adding to the public coordination-type content, such as marking which linguistic action is taking place - various ways of structuring contributions, including how parts of the discourse connect <p><i>Part of Disambiguation</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - certain aspects of disambiguation among potential contributions, whether done by sentence-level grammar or discourse-level grammar 	- The other, intention recognition, aspects of disambiguation
Non-Contributions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open-ended, non-propositional prompts involved in directing the other person's thought; i) metaphor and other tropes; ii) non-serious speech such as humor, irony, and sarcasm; iii) hints

Chart 1.2

4. Qe, Qc and the Semantics–Pragmatics Boundary: Qs/p

Lepore and Stone's answers to our twin questions, along with their innovative understanding of terms like 'contribution', 'convention', and 'imagination', reshape the landscape of the semantics–pragmatics debate. It will thus be helpful, as a final step in exposition, to introduce a third question:

Qs/p: Which causes/effects are semantic and which are pragmatic?

To appreciate how radical Lepore and Stone's reconception of the semantics–pragmatics boundary is, recall that, since Grice (1975), it has often been supposed that semantic effects equate to "what is said", while pragmatic effects equate to what is implicated. As for causes, the old-fashioned Gricean is said to recognize exactly two of those as well: the conventional meaning of the expression used, which mostly fixes both "what is said" and conventional implicatures; and general-purpose reasoning about rational cooperation, whose main role is to fix conversational implicatures. ('Mostly' and 'main' are required because of disambiguation and assignment of reference to context-sensitive items.)

Lepore and Stone roundly reject this Grice-inspired take on things. First, it is too monolithic. There are, for them, a rich variety of conventions, which yield an equally rich variety of contribution-type interpretive effects, as we saw above. Similarly, there are a variety of cognitive mechanisms beyond detecting and repairing violations to rational cooperation, and they underwrite a sundry range of non-contributions. Second, and related, the whole category of conversational implicature is ill-conceived:

Put most starkly: we have no use for a category of conversational implicatures, as traditionally and currently understood. (6)

Given the broader space of meaning and interpretation, we are quite skeptical that any useful work can be done specifically by the category of conversational implicature; and so, to the extent that the traditional division between semantics and pragmatics relies on the category of [conversational implicature], we are deeply skeptical about this division. (150)

Their reason should be clear by now: such an alleged effect, a genuine conversational implicature as understood by traditional Griceans, would be a *contribution* to the scoreboard caused by *imagination* (i.e., belonging in the top-right quadrant of our chart). The bulk of the text argues that this is an empty category—save for disambiguation.

In place of the Grice-inspired take on the boundary, Lepore and Stone propose a three-way classification, which maps onto their answers as to which causes produce which interpretive effects. There are potential contributions to the scoreboard, afforded entirely by convention. That is semantics. There is a role for convention⁺ in selecting among the potential contributions. This is pragmatics. Non-contributions, finally, are caused by imagination. That is, in terms of Chart 1.1, Lepore and Stone replace the Gricean semantics–pragmatics boundary with a tripartite division: semantics sits at

the top left; pragmatics straddles the top two quadrants; and the bottom right quadrant is “neither”. (The bottom left quadrant remains empty: for Lepore and Stone, any interpretive effect caused by convention makes a contribution.)

In rejecting Grice, Lepore and Stone consider a number of utterance types traditionally classified as conversational implicatures and argue that none of them belongs in the top right quadrant. Some alleged examples are really done by convention according to them, for example, both indirect speech acts and additional utterance content attaching to logical connectives (see Part 2 of *Imagination and Convention*). As we hinted above, they make the case by advocating for an enriched range of linguistic rules: “This goes beyond syntax and semantics as usually conceived, but, we will argue, it is part of speakers’ linguistic grammar nonetheless” (92). The remaining alleged examples of conversational implicatures, such as non-serious speech and hinting, do not belong on the conversational scoreboard at all, because they are not genuinely propositional (see Part 3 of *Imagination and Convention*).

In brief, Lepore and Stone deploy Lewisian ideas to move some alleged conversational implicatures to the left in Chart 1.1 and Davidsonian ones to move the remainder down. Chart 1.3 captures this final element of exposition:

<i>INTERPRETIVE EFFECTS</i>	Caused by Convention	Caused by Imagination
Contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semantics - The conventional part of pragmatics (i.e. of disambiguation) <p>[Some alleged conversational implicatures go here: e.g., indirect speech acts, enriched meanings for logical connectives, and scalar implicatures (See Part 2 of the book)]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The inferential part of pragmatics (i.e., of disambiguation) - This quadrant is otherwise empty <p style="text-align: center;">← [Alleged Conversational Implicatures]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>
Non-Contributions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neither semantics nor pragmatics <p>[Some alleged conversational implicatures go here: e.g., hints, irony, and sarcasm (See Part 3 of the book)]</p>

Chart 1.3

A very brief recap is in order before we turn to the critical portion of the essay. At the outset we introduced two general questions, which seem to confront all of us: Qe, concerning the interpretive effects of linguistic utterances, and Qc, concerning the causes of those effects. As we read their book, Lepore and Stone present novel answers on both fronts, drawing insightfully on Lewis (1969, 1979) and Davidson (1978).

Specifically, contributions, which come in a number of sub-varieties, derive almost entirely from various Lewis-style conventions; all other interpretive effects, which equally come in a number of sub-varieties, derive from variations on Davidson-style imagination. These answers, we saw, contrast sharply with the traditional Gricean take on things. Indeed, Lepore and Stone reject the standard semantics–pragmatics divide as inherited from Grice. For them, semantics pertains to contributions and conventions, the top left quadrant of our chart. Pragmatics is disambiguation, which involves conventions and a soupçon of imagination, thereby straddling the top two quadrants of our chart. They also introduce a third domain into the landscape—which is neither semantics nor pragmatics—namely, the domain of non-contributions achieved by the imagination. This third domain in the lower right of our chart is not even countenanced by traditional views (with the notable exception of Davidson).

Part Two: Evaluating Their View

As we said at the outset, our evaluative focus will be on concerns about Lepore and Stone's view. In passing, however, let us consider several ways in which their position might well be philosophically superior.

Because they apply convention much more broadly than Grice does, their view may render more of conversational interaction tractable using familiar rule-based tools. In particular, it may explain in empirical detail how we convey clear and precise messages in cases that have been traditionally treated as based on general-purpose inference. Three test cases seemingly illustrate the promise of their approach. According to Lepore and Stone, their convention-heavy view can explain with greater detail and finesse why 'Can I have French toast?' is used to place an order; why 'Oil prices have doubled and demand for consumer goods plunged' conveys more than a truth-functional conjunction; and why 'Well, it looked red,' said with the right intonation, can express doubt about whether the object in question actually was red. The suggestion, as we understand it, is not that there are ambiguities produced by traditional sentence-level syntax and sentence-level compositional semantics. As they suggest, the word 'and' is not lexically ambiguous between & and &+then (126). Instead, there are previously underappreciated linguistic conventions (e.g., discourse-level linguistic conventions) that yield richer potential readings *of the sentence in this discourse context*—with pragmatics then merely choosing among these.

Their view also seemingly explains certain cases of confusion, ignorance, and deceit where an intention-based view of speech act content gets the wrong results. Returning to our chess analogy, a novice is able to make an unintended move because the conventional rules of the game entail that the physical changes she makes to the board have that effect. Similarly, Lepore and Stone hold that conventions explain how people can actually commit themselves to quite specific things, even if they lack the right Grice-style intentions (e.g., inadvertently committing to plant an elm, by saying 'I promise to

plant an elm, even while having beeches in mind). And they explain why liars, who are not cooperating, and who are masking their intentions rather than revealing them, nonetheless communicate quite specific things: their overarching aim notwithstanding, the conventions fix what they have said.

Also very promising is their view that in linguistic utterances, neither the causes nor the effects are monolithic. The interpretive effects are not just truth evaluable messages that the speaker means and the hearer must recover. The causes are more than just compositional truth-conditional semantic rules operating on sentence-level trees, plus “general cognition”. (If anything, as will emerge immediately below, we think that Lepore and Stone understate the variety of things we do with language, and the variety of special-purpose tools that natural languages provide.)

5. Empirical Objections

A. *Linguistic Conventions Without Contributions*

To be clear, in both this sub-section and the next, we are posing empirical critiques which take on board, for the sake of argument, Lepore and Stone’s general taxonomic categories. That is, for the time being, we are granting that the right way to construe Qe and Qc really is in terms of how Chart 1.1 should be filled in. Our plaint immediately below will be that, even framing the issues in this way, there are cases which look like counterexamples to what we have called their ‘bold conjecture’. That all of this is *pro tem* is important because, in the next section, we will ultimately urge that theirs are not the right classificatory categories in any case.

Consider first terms like ‘alas’, ‘amen’, ‘bravo’, ‘bye’, ‘cheers’, ‘congrats’, ‘damn’, ‘gesundheit’, ‘hello’, ‘hurray’, ‘mazel tov’, ‘our condolences’, ‘yeah’, and ‘thanks’. We take it to be obvious that the performative roles of such *phatic expressions* (as we label them) are conventionally fixed: other languages use other sounds to perform the corresponding acts. Yet these don’t seem to be “inquiry-type meanings”, whose point is to arrive at a public solution to a coordination problem. The meaning of ‘gesundheit’ is something like: *Used as a response when someone sneezes*. (This would be how one would explain its meaning to a foreigner learning English.)

In a similar vein, there is a clear conventionalized difference in meaning among ‘barf’, ‘vomit’, and ‘emesis’—a difference in register, specifically *level of formality*. A second language learner who thought them perfect synonyms, and used them interchangeably, would not have mastered English. Similarly, in French there are subtle differences in the conventional uses of ‘vous’ and ‘tu’. ‘Vous’ is normally the more formal and polite expression, so that in contexts where friendship and familiarity are assumed, its use over ‘tu’ can be a slight. Still, the differences in both cases do not pertain to information—whether stated, presupposed, or conventionally implied. The way the world must be for ‘tu fumes’, said to Alex, to obtain is exactly as it must be for ‘Vous fumez’ to obtain.

Nor do the differences seem to impact upon speech act kind or information structure as elaborated in the text.³

Another very intriguing candidate for the bottom left quadrant are *evaluative statements*, for example, aesthetic ones, which trace to discourse-level linguistic conventions.⁴ To make the point, we first need to introduce an entertaining, if unkind, example. *The WB's Superstar USA* was a 2004 reality TV program in which, unbeknownst to the performers, the judges were looking for America's worst singer. The benighted contestants, who massively overestimated their singing abilities, supposed that it was the usual kind of contest. Not to give away the true objective, the performances therefore had to be characterized in a purposely misleading way. So as not to lie, the panelists systematically uttered sentences that were strictly speaking true, but subject to a double entendre in terms of evaluation. They would say, for example, things whose strict truth-conditions pertained to a mental effect in them: 'Your singing was utterly astonishing', 'I will remember your performance for the rest of my life', 'That was truly intense, and deeply affected me'. They would accurately describe the rarity of the performances, uttering sentences like: 'No one else comes close to performing that tune the way that you do' and 'Your rendition was truly exceptional and extraordinary'. Or they would comment on how the singing might be reported: 'Anyone seeing that would be left speechless', 'Your interpretation of that song will be the talk of the town.' A key point here is that, as the television audience well understood, all of these utterances in fact exhibited some kind of negative-valence meaning. That was part of the intended and actual interpretive effect—one which the unfortunate singers failed to grasp.

This connects to Lepore and Stone's taxonomy as follows. In the usual circumstances, the sentences produced really do carry a positive valence. We don't wish to take a stand on what exactly the nature of this special positive- versus negative-valence meaning in evaluations amounts to. That is a very difficult question indeed. Happily, it doesn't matter for present purposes, as long as it wouldn't be a contribution by Lepore and Stone's lights—and, reflecting on the negative case, it certainly seems that this "evaluative content" belongs in the same class as metaphor, non-propositional hints, etc. Now consider *why* it is so heard in the usual case: it's seemingly because there is a discourse-level linguistic convention, specific to this genre. In reviews of movies,

³ For additional discussion, see Stainton (2014). The tendency to disregard phatic expressions and the like traces, we suspect, to the implicit presumption that the paradigm of language use is proto-scientific debate: "To engage in conversation is, essentially, to distinguish among alternative possible ways that things may be" (Stalnaker 1978: 184). Putting it polemically, it's as if all linguistic interaction fundamentally pertained to either theoretical philosophy (regarding what we should believe) or to practical philosophy (regarding how we should act). In a related vein, this disregard traces historically to the implicit presumption that our spoken tongues are just more complex and unruly versions of artificial logical languages. Both presumptions, we would urge, should be rejected by empirically minded philosophers of language as yet another monolith.

⁴ The following owes a debt to Isidora Stojanovic's paper "Mutual Beliefs in the Interpretation of Evaluative Statements", and to discussion with her.

musicals, concerts, etc., and in the more usual sort of reality TV competition, it is a convention that utterances of ‘That was truly intense, and deeply affected me’ et al. will constitute high praise. As a matter of convention, that is, in those contexts, such sentences are not used wholly descriptively. That is precisely why the contestants, believing that the conventional circumstances obtained, naturally heard the judges’ observations as laudatory, while the television audience, who knew that the usual conventions were not in play, (correctly) heard them otherwise. What this shows is that valence-type content—that is, the positive evaluative valence of the usual case as opposed to the joking negative one—can derive, in large part, from the rules governing this discourse situation. It seems, then, that we have yet another interpretive effect which is not a contribution, and yet which traces to linguistic convention.

To summarize, we have identified three linguistic phenomena which, seeming to fit Lepore and Stone’s criteria both for non-contributions and for interpretive effects which trace to convention, defy their classification. Having drawn attention to these three, we expect readers will be able to identify numerous others (for example, phrases used for sheer emoting: ‘Fucking jerk’ yelled at a driver, or looking at the Grand Canyon and saying ‘Wow’). All afford theory-internal challenges to what we have dubbed their ‘bold conjecture’.

B. Contributions Owing Heavily to Imagination

It seems to us that there are many, many cases where a precise proposition can be meant, and can be recognized as “updating the public state of play”, without convention doing the heavy lifting. That is, the upper right quadrant is also heavily populated. Previous critics, including Carston (2016) and Szabó (2016), have stressed this very point. Carston, drawing on examples from Hirschberg (1991) and Simons (2014, 2017), points to scalar-type implicatures but without a requisite convention, as in (1); and she notes lexical enrichment not owing to convention but rather to real-world knowledge, as in (2):

1. A: Have you mailed that letter?
B: I’m typing it right now
(Conveys that B has not mailed the letter)
2. A: What’s making all that noise in the attic?
B: Either there’s a nest up there or some squirrels have moved in
(Pragmatically enriches to include only inhabited non-squirrel nests)

Another class of examples involves sophisticated mind reading, in which speaker meaning is determinate, though linguistic conventions are insufficient to fix that meaning. Here is an example that we owe to Sperber and Wilson (1986). During the cold war, Americans Alice and Bonnie both reject allegations that the USSR is repressive, has food shortages, etc., as mere US propaganda. They both hold that it is really a workers’ paradise. Alice decides to move there, and to write back to her friend about the actual conditions. Just to be sure that her message isn’t censored, they agree on a

code: *if it isn't a workers' paradise, but censorship prohibits her from saying so, Alice will write in purple ink.* Six months later, Bonnie receives a letter written in blue ink. It says:

3. Comrade, we were right. Conditions in the USSR are wonderful and there is complete freedom of expression. It is utter propaganda that there are widespread shortages. Oddly, there is one thing one cannot purchase here, and that is purple ink.

The crucial lesson of this example is that Alice conveys their entirely precise, agreed-upon, message with (3). Yet the interlocutors have not established a convention that the phrase 'Oddly, there is one thing one cannot purchase here, and that is purple ink' shall have that meaning.

A third set of examples in which there seems to be a precise truth-conditional meaning (hence a contribution, according to Lepore and Stone), yet not fixed by linguistic conventions, involves non-conventional uses of expressions. We'll mention three types. Consider first (successful) malaprops. Marga Reimer (2004) provides a lovely example. A mother and son want to buy a painting for the father's birthday. The dad is a fan of surrealist art. The son points to a copy of Munch's *The Scream* and says:

4. That painting is sure realistic

The key data point is this. On the one hand, the son means a quite specific and determinate proposition, namely that the salient painting is surrealist; indeed, he means something true in this instance; so, it would seem, this ought to count as a genuine contribution. On the other hand, the linguistic conventions of English do not determine any such meaning for (4). We get the same result in cases of other speech errors, such as:

5. My wife does not drink alcohol these days because she is embarrassed [said by a Spanish speaker, not realizing that 'embarazada' translates to 'pregnant' in English]
6. That's irrelevant
7. Smith looks very tired [said of Jones, seen at a distance]
8. Great Britain has voted to leave the UN

Neologisms such as (9) and (10) also express determinate meanings not solely determined by conventions:

9. The boy porched the newspaper (Clark and Clark 1979)
10. Gamesmanship-type non-moves (Stainton and Viger, section 2, above)⁵

⁵ See Stainton (2016b) for additional discussion of such non-conventional uses. We cannot resist noting, by the way, that precise speaker meanings frequently occur, without being wholly fixed by conventions or convention*, in cases of sub-sentential speech. For example, a speaker indicates the location of a table leg with the Prepositional Phrase 'On the stoop'. The speaker means the *de re* proposition, about the table leg, that it is on the stoop; this is a perfectly precise inquiry-type public meaning that, again, surely ought to count as the speaker's contribution by Lepore and Stone's lights. Nonetheless, Stainton (2006) has argued (at *exhausting* length) that this is not because the expression produced, itself, means that proposition, not even relative to the set of contextual parameters. The conventions of English do not fix this meaning—barring some kind of semantic or syntactic ellipsis account, which remains empirically implausible. For the most recent volleys on the latter topic, see Martí (2015) and Botterell and Stainton (2017).

We end with some counterexamples where Lepore and Stone themselves *must* concede that there aren't conventions at work, namely in hints. Lepore and Stone rightly hold that hints are a paradigm case of the non-conventional; but they are mistaken to add that hints are individuated in terms of a kind of content, specifically non-propositional content. Rather, as Stainton (2016a) urges, hints are individuated in terms of *how* the message is conveyed (namely, indirectly), and *why* the speaker opted for an indirect method (e.g., to avoid breaking a rule, or to avoid taking full responsibility for the message). A couple of examples will adequately illustrate. Suppose that a person has promised Alex not to tell the police where he is. Even consonant with that, the promise-maker can phone a tip line and say:

11. I'm calling about the \$5000 reward for Alex. I saw him two minutes ago. I swore not to *tell* anyone where he is, but, um . . . his car is parked in Betty's garage

On the one hand, the speaker means something quite precise by this—something about Alex's location, and something that seemingly merits Lepore and Stone's label 'contribution'. On the other hand, there isn't a linguistic convention to the effect that (11) can be used to mean that Alex is at Betty's house. (That's why this is a hint, and doesn't strictly break the promise.) A second example along the same lines: A teacher could utter:

12. The rules say I cannot tell you your final grade, but have you heard that all apples almost always appear around April?'

What is hinted is clear: the final grade was an A. But, again, the whole point of using this roundabout manner of speaking is that this is not a conventional way of communicating that. It is not a telling, but only a hinting.

The foregoing—scalar-type implicatures and lexical enrichments which rely on real-world knowledge; sophisticated mind reading under censorship in the purple ink case; various kinds of perfectly interpretable speech errors; and determinate, precise, and propositional hints—are all potential counterexamples to the bold conjecture that contributions derive from convention (save for a smidge of disambiguation). Like numerous other commentators on *Imagination and Convention*, we thus think that, even granting their classificatory scheme, there are plenty of linguistic phenomena which belong in the upper right quadrant of Chart 1.1

The most obvious rejoinder for Lepore and Stone to make is to insist that all of our alleged counterexamples are simply additional grist for their mill. Where there are contributions, there are also, they may insist, unnoticed linguistic conventions at work. And where there are conventional meanings they didn't discuss—for example, phatic expressions, levels of formality, and evaluative valence—there are unnoticed sub-varieties of contributions. Indeed, this is essentially the stance they take in their most recent publication on these topics (Lepore and Stone 2016: 204 *ff.*) The most glaring problem with this rejoinder, of course, is that positing conventions and contributions whenever required to save the hypothesis will strike their opponents as *ad hoc*. But

there is a less obvious and deeper problem: such an appeal highlights the fact that Lepore and Stone offer up too little in the way of independently-motivated grounding for their key notions of ‘contribution’ and ‘linguistic convention’. This leads us to our final evaluative sections: methodological objections, and a critique of their overarching framework.

6. Methodological Objections

The first set of objections were theory-internal. From here forward, we will take issue with the taxonomic categories with which Lepore and Stone approach interpretive effects and their causes.

A. *Changing the Topic on the Linguist*

On first reading *Imagination and Convention*, one understands ‘linguistic convention’ as another term for ‘grammar’ or ‘knowledge of language’. Lepore and Stone’s own usage very much encourages this:

On the other hand we have our view: that the specific interpretations we find in these cases⁶ are always a matter of linguistic knowledge that associates forms with interpretive constraints which completely determine the content of interpretation. Pragmatics merely disambiguates.

(94; see also pp. 89, 143–4, and 148)

That, in turn, seemingly connects the book to what mainstream linguists paradigmatically inquire about, something along the lines of the nature of a certain autonomous system: of naturally occurring phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic rules; operating over special hierarchical structures (such as phonemes, morphemes, phrases, sentences, etc.); likely stored in a separate and special-purpose module of the mind; exemplified by such tongues as East Cree, English, Swahili, and Urdu. (A subject matter, in short, which is very *unlike* the game of chess.)

Reading the book as addressing such topics, ‘linguistic convention’ obviously would not encompass cultural practices which have nothing especially to do with communicative signaling. Conventions like:

13.
 - i. In Australia and England, they drive on the left
 - ii. One usually tips the bell hop at a hotel, but not the manager
 - iii. Sandals are not formal footwear
 - iv. Westerners wear black to a funeral
 - v. Taxi passengers sit in the backseat
 - vi. The smaller fork is used for salad

⁶ That is, their three parade cases: ‘Can I have French toast?’ to place an order; ‘Oil prices doubled and demand for consumer goods plunged’ encoding that oil prices doubled first; ‘Well it looked red’ meaning that possibly it wasn’t really red.

Nor would ‘linguistic convention’ have in its extension symbols that do not belong to natural languages. Among the many signaling systems excluded would be:

14.
 - i. Semaphore
 - ii. Military hand signals or gang-sign
 - iii. Morse code
 - iv. Figures such as a circle with a line through it, or a stylized male and female side-by-side
 - v. Turn signals and stop lights
 - vi. Blue meaning cold, red meaning hot
 - vii. That moving the light switch to the “up” position turns the light on
 - viii. That the big hand being at 12 and the little hand at 1 means one o’clock

Finally, understanding ‘linguistic convention’ to pertain to grammar and knowledge of language, it presumably wouldn’t even include cultural knowledge specifically about language use, such as:

15.
 - i. In French, a silent ‘e’ is pronounced when singing (as in the bedtime lullaby *Frère Jacques*).
 - ii. In English, one says ‘cheese’ when photos are taken (as opposed to ‘whiskey’ in Spanish and ‘eggplant’ in Chinese).
 - iii. Scandinavians answer the phone with their first name, rather than with ‘Hello’.
 - iv. In English, formal letters begin with ‘Dear’, rather than ‘Esteemed’; ‘Hey’ or other slang is not used.
 - v. ‘@#\$\$’ stands for foul language.
 - vi. In the US the date is written as MM/DD/YY, whereas in Canada it is DD/MM/YY.
 - vii. Christians read aloud the 23rd Psalm at funerals and First Corinthians 13 at weddings.
 - viii. One whispers in church and in libraries, and at the symphony, but one shouts at rock concerts.
 - ix. In the US, someone named Shaniqua Washington is likely African American, while someone named Jesus Gonzalez is likely Latino.
 - x. In Canada, human height is given using ‘foot’ and ‘inch’, but driving distances are given using ‘kilometer’; gas and milk prices are given using ‘liter’, but beer prices are given using ‘ounce’.
 - xi. People say grace before the meal, not after.
 - xii. In London, Ontario fans yell, ‘Let’s go Majors’ at baseball games but ‘Go Knights go’ at hockey games.

Having clarified what ‘grammar’, ‘knowledge of language’, and ‘linguistic convention’ are customarily understood to mean (by highlighting what they would ordinarily *not* encompass), we can now raise our first methodological objection. If, as they seem wont to do, Lepore and Stone address the counterexamples in (1)–(12) by massively expanding ‘linguistic convention’, then their book loses much of its bite for linguists. This holds doubly if they re-construe ‘contribution’ and ‘disambiguation’ to accommodate our other problem cases. Doing so, what they will have shown is:

On Qe and Qc: Linguistic conventions (in an unfamiliar and very broad sense) together with disambiguation (in an unfamiliar and very broad sense) are necessary and sufficient for linguistic contributions (in a peculiar technical sense).

On Qs/p: Semantics pertains to linguistic convention (in an unfamiliar and very broad sense) and linguistic contributions (in a peculiar technical sense), while pragmatics is merely disambiguation (in an unfamiliar and very broad sense).

B. No Answer to Qe and Qc?

Recall Lepore and Stone’s bold conjecture: disambiguation aside, there are contributions where and only where the interpretive effect derives from convention; all other interpretive effects are open-ended invitations to explore, and they involve imagination. (Related to this, they hold that semantics pertains to contributions; that pragmatics is merely disambiguation; and that imagination-driven interpretive effects are neither.) In terms of our chart, Lepore and Stone predict that the bottom left and top right quadrants are essentially empty. This hypothesis, we suggested, faced two kinds of (seeming) counterexamples: conventions without contributions, and contributions without conventions. There is, of course, a very natural response. Diversify still further the range and variety of conventions and contributions—thereby not only defanging our alleged counterexamples, but reinforcing their central point that neither the causes nor the effects in linguistic utterances are monolithic. In the last section, we presented a first methodological objection to this gambit. If ‘linguistic convention’ is read in an unfamiliar and promiscuous way—for instance, such that it might include (15 i–xii), (14 i–viii) or maybe even (13 i–vi)—then the book cannot have the radical import for linguistics that they want it to: it will simply cease to engage the long-standing question of the roles of grammar and knowledge of language, because Lepore and Stone will have covertly changed the topic. We turn now to a second methodological concern.

It is consistent with what we wrote in the previous section that Lepore and Stone do provide perfectly fine answers; it’s just that they have re-construed seemingly shared questions in (for some) a disappointing way.⁷ We now want to press a much stronger complaint, namely that *Imagination and Convention* may not provide satisfactory answers to our twin questions at all, even when re-construed.

⁷ For instance, and in line with their claim to “offer an account of language as a specifically social competence for making our ideas public” (198), one might read them as addressing interesting and important questions about interpretive effects in social semiotics generally, rather than in natural language (*cf.* Gregory 2009 and Halliday 1985).

Start with Qe. Granting that phatic expressions, level of formality and evaluative valence are all conventional, it's easy enough for Lepore and Stone to maintain that they are simply novel sub-varieties of non-truth-conditional contributions. That it's easy enough is, however, precisely the problem. Making such a move, their category of contributions ceases progressively to look like a genuine kind. One is left, instead, with a rag-bag. At best, a sympathetic reader may share the nebulous intuition that there is a "family resemblance" at play; but even such an intuition would, we fear, be too heavily driven by antecedent commitment to Lepore and Stone's framework. What's more, appealing to such theory-laden intuitions would fit ill with their admirable call for a more empirical approach. At worst, what genuinely unites all of the "sub-varieties of contributions" into a non-arbitrary class is that they all arise from convention—which would mean that the *if it's a convention, it's a contribution* half of their bold conjecture is not an empirical hypothesis after all, but a definitional truism.⁸ Either way, we are left without a satisfying take on Qe.

Turning to Qc, Lepore and Stone can indeed grant that our cases—scalar implicatures and lexical enrichment based on real-world knowledge (as in (1)–(2) above); terrifically clever redeployment of codes, relying on lots of sophisticated mind reading (as in (3)); malaprops and other speech errors (as in (4)–(8)); on-the-fly coinages (as in (9)–(10)); and determinate propositional "hints" (as in (11)–(12))—are all contributions. They can do so by insisting that there are unnoticed linguistic conventions at work. Again, however, that they can deal with purported counterexamples so readily is not a virtue of the view. To the contrary, whereas genuine explanation requires severe constraints on causal posits, they can introduce their conventions *ad libitum*.

An emerging theme is that admission to one of Lepore and Stone's classificatory categories comes "too cheap". Their categories are insufficiently robust. An even deeper aspect of this complaint is that genuine explanation requires causes. (By definition, an answer to Qc does so.) What they offer instead are regularities. And regularities, *per se*—even ones that solve coordination problems, whose point is signaling, and where there are logically possible alternatives—are *so* cheap that they aren't proper causes at all. True, Lepore and Stone make reference to mechanisms, but they say too little about how to characterize one. What's more, the burgeoning literature in philosophy of neuroscience, which appeals to mechanisms as explanations of cognitive phenomena, requires a multi-level account in which a phenomenon at any given level is a result of components and their activities at another level (see, e.g., Bechtel 2008 and Craver 2007). Neither convention nor imagination, broadly construed, seem analyzable in such terms.⁹

⁸ A related point: Lepore and Stone seem to be fellow travelers with King and Stanley (2005), Martí (2015), Merchant (2010), Stanley (2000), and Stanley and Szabó (2000) in striving to render more of linguistic interaction tractable using just the linguist's familiar formal tools. If the book is to achieve this goal, however, their bold conjecture cannot be a matter of implicit definition—for example, "something is a properly linguistic interaction if and only if it can be handled using the familiar techniques of linguistics"—but must instead be an empirically supported discovery.

⁹ To come at this methodological complaint in terms of pedigree, *Imagination and Convention* could well have carried the sub-title, "Displacing Grice with Davidson/Lewis". Now Grice, correctly in our view, took the mental very seriously in his philosophy of language. In contrast, both Davidson and Lewis are

In brief, to overcome worries about giving empirically false ones, Lepore and Stone risk giving no satisfying answers to Qe and Qc at all.

7. A Relevance Theoretic Response

We end our discussion of *Imagination and Convention* with some brief remarks on an alternative approach to Qe and Qc, one which does not change the topic away from grammar/knowledge of language, and which (we think) invokes genuine kinds.

To properly address Qc, we propose seeking out genuine cognitive mechanisms instead of mere behavioral patterns. Specifically, we propose following Relevance Theorists in the search for psychological kinds as the relevant objectively-individuated causes. One such cause will be the language faculty—which, importantly, tracks what is usually meant by ‘grammar’ and ‘knowledge of language’ (for related ideas, see Collins 2016). The others will be various mental modules—long-term memory, mind reading, perception of one’s present environment, etc.—that, in conversational exchanges, operate on the outputs from the language-specific part of the human mind. Given this picture, the investigator discovers which causes are properly linguistic. Yes, we have pre-theoretical intuitions about this: for example, it certainly seems that knowing when to say grace, and how to pronounce silent letters when singing in French, do not trace causally to the language faculty. Ultimately, however, such intuitions get confirmed or disconfirmed by evidence from a host of areas, including previously unexpected ones: for example, acquisition studies, language deficits, eye-tracking experiments, comparative linguistics, brain scans, etc.

Coming at Qc this way allows one to address troubles about the taxonomy of effects as well. That latter classification should not be artificial either, nor adjudicated by vague and theory-internal intuitions. We propose a straightforward solution: don’t attempt to independently taxonomize interpretive effects (e.g., in terms of the scoreboard), thereafter asking what cause achieves which effects. Instead, deal with the threat of *covertly* classifying effects in terms of causes—thereby turning a seeming empirical discovery into a definitional truism—by *overtly* so classifying. We propose, that is, wholeheartedly embracing the sorting of effects in terms of their psychological causes.¹⁰ (This is not, of course, a novel idea. It’s an application of the Chomskyan program: find the nature of the linguistic competence, and then hive off as performance-effects

students of Quine; and Quinean leanings don’t jibe with generative grammar in particular, or realist cognitive science in general. What’s on offer, to the contrary, is a behaviorist ersatz: knowledge of language as simply “an abstract way of characterizing what a language user is able to do” (Lepore and Stone 2016: 208).

¹⁰ To forestall a charge of inconsistency, and a potential misunderstanding: our point is not that effects *cannot* be taxonomized except in terms of their causes. To the contrary, as Stainton (2016a) stresses, one can and should classify utterances in terms of what impacts they have on normative states of affairs. (For instance, an utterance should be classified as a full-on statement only if it makes its speaker lie-prone.) Crucially, however, that kind of taxonomizing is not a precursor to empirically identifying the causes of effects so classified. To the contrary, a main point of Stainton (2016a) is that one should not even attempt to pair up effects classified normatively (e.g., as a full-on statement vs. something merely conveyed) with causes characterized in linguistic, physical, and psychological terms (e.g., as a sincere production of a declarative sentence).

the ones that do not trace causally to it.) Putting this in terms of semantics versus pragmatics, and closely echoing Relevance Theory, “semantic effects” are simply those that derive exclusively from knowledge of language; “pragmatic effects” are content-aspects of utterances deriving from other parts of the mind. The latter then sub-divide into content-effects which arise from enriching items within the decoded representation (that is, “developing the logical form”), and those which arise from conjoining wholly new representations to that logical form. As above, it then turns out to be an empirical issue both whether an effect is linguistic at all, and if so, what sub-kind it belongs to. Are truth-conditions in general, and what is strictly speaking asserted, “semantic effects”? What about the speech act kind? Phatic exchanges? Are any of (15 i–xii) properly linguistic? One finds out by considering whether these do or do not derive from the language faculty.

We close our evaluative discussion by briefly echoing important observations by Bezuidenhout (2016: 182–4). We have urged that Relevance Theory is attractive methodologically and philosophically: it promises to afford genuine kinds as causes; and, on the basis of those, one can hope to taxonomize interpretive effects in a more empirically grounded and revealing fashion. But it also has important advantages in terms of capturing data—ones which may surprise those readers of *Imagination and Convention* who aren’t steeped in Relevance Theory’s recent evolution.

Among the very promising empirical insights of Lepore and Stone’s book, we said, was its recognition of a diversity of linguistic rules and of inferential processes, along with the insistence that interpretive effects go beyond the recovery of determinate propositional contents. That is, there is more at work than bare-bones syntax-semantics on the one hand, and general rationality on the other, yielding specific messages which the sender has in mind (and which the interlocutor needs to recover). Now, Lepore and Stone suppose that embracing this diversity of causes and effects differentiates them from all Grice-influenced pragmaticians. Yet, coming to the aforementioned advantages of Relevance Theory, Lepore and Stone have allies therein. Open-endedness of interpretive effects has been an important part of the theory since the 1986 edition of *Relevance*. Regarding grammar, Relevance Theorists are wholly open to the rules of grammar being diverse and more sophisticated than mainstream generative syntax supposes. And it is a core tenet nowadays that there isn’t just one monolithic “inference engine”, but instead numerous discrete modules at work in pragmatic processing. One could profitably read the empirical parts of *Imagination and Convention*, then, as drawing attention to novel and important linguistic phenomena, all the while thinking that the best way to address them is with the underappreciated tools of present-day Relevance Theory (Bezuidenhout presents numerous detailed examples). What’s more, it seems to us that Relevance Theory has the empirical upper hand in one crucial respect. Positing as it currently does both input modules and central system modules, it becomes eminently possible that, rather than having a mechanism specific to each of metaphor, irony, humor, etc., there is, instead, the same set of modular mechanisms, but interacting in divergent ways.

8. Summary

It truly has been a long and winding road. So, at the risk of belaboring the point, one last summary may prove helpful. We framed our discussion around twin questions:

Qe: What interpretive effects can linguistic utterances have?

Qc: What causes give rise to interpretive effects?

Drawing on key concepts from Lewis and Davidson, we read Lepore and Stone as recasting these questions in a specific form:

- Which interpretive effects are contributions to the conversational record, and which are merely invitations for open-ended exploration?
- What role does convention play in causing these interpretive effects, and what role does imagination play?

The answer, which we termed their ‘bold conjecture’, is that contributions are fixed by convention (augmented by a soupçon of imagination when required for disambiguation), whereas imagination simply nudges the hearer to organize her thoughts in various creative ways. Lepore and Stone also insist that there is enormous diversity with respect to sub-varieties of contributions, open-ended explorations, conventions, and imaginative processing. The result, then, is not so much a disagreement about where to place various interpretive effects of utterances within the familiar semantic–pragmatic terrain, but rather about the very landscape itself in which the debate should be conducted: semantics becomes potential contributions provided by linguistic convention; pragmatics merely amounts to selecting among the potential contributions using only linguistic convention and convention⁺; and non-contributions deriving from imagination belong to neither category.

Having spent considerable space on exposition, we next presented objections. They were of two types. First, granting to them the terms of the debate, we urged that there are examples that defy the bold conjecture. Specifically, we presented cases which, seemingly by their own lights, are caused by conventions, but are not contributions to the scoreboard—phatic expressions, level of formality, and evaluative valence. We also presented cases of interpretive effects, which should presumably count as contributions, in their sense of the term, but are not the result of convention-plus-disambiguation. Our second type of objection was methodological. Lepore and Stone face a dilemma: either their view is empirically inadequate, or it requires re-construing ‘convention’ and ‘disambiguation’ so broadly, and ‘contribution’ so theory-internally, that it loses much of its initial bite vis-à-vis linguistics. The latter horn, which seems to be what tempts them, invited a second methodological objection as well, namely, that because their classificatory categories—which we had granted them for the sake of argument—turn out, in the end, not to be sufficiently robust, Lepore and Stone do not offer a satisfactory answer to our questions at all. We suggest that the methodological solution is to follow Relevance Theory: address Qc in terms of psycholinguistic causes; give

priority to Qc over Qe; and couch the semantics/pragmatics boundary in terms of those human-specific cognitive kinds which turn out to be at work in our conversational interactions.^{11,12}

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¹¹ Here is another important (and clearly unintended) lesson one can take away from *Imagination and Convention*. As Armstrong and Michaelson (2016: 139) note, the book falls within a broad class of semantic theories—a class which is quickly becoming a new orthodoxy. Said approaches treat context-change potential, dynamic updating, etc., as the standing meaning of expressions: for example, to know what a sentence *S* means is to know a function from every potential initial scoreboard to the post-utterance scoreboard that would result from tokening *S*. Ironically, one can read *Imagination and Convention* as reinforcing a worry about this approach. Lepore and Stone's examples show something very important, namely, just how much needs to be on the scoreboard, and just how rich the update rules need to be, for this program of research to succeed. All of their conventions—both the ones they mention, and those they would need to add to account for the potential counterexamples—would have to be incorporated into the presumed updating function. But, runs the worry, the result is implausibly massive and motley. To come at it from the point of view of a cognitivist, Lepore and Stone's examples underscore the astonishing variety and richness of information that would need to be stored in the human language faculty, if update semantics is to describe our semantic competence. In light of this, the cognitivist concludes that it's better to treat patterns of updating (if such there be) as interaction effects: such patterns reflect both what the expression means in the language, but also the many non-linguistic factors which are the mainstay of pragmatics (as classically understood). And it's better to treat the scoreboard not as a notion central to linguistic theory, but as a hodgepodge of performance effects.

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